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September 1921



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"LINCOLN WAS SO GLAD, HE KISSED ME!"

HENRY E. WING, a retired Methodist minister of Springdale, Connecticut, is 82 years old. But he can tell one story of his youth as clearly as if it happened yesterday. It is a story that any American would be proud to tell—a story revealing the human side of Abraham Lincoln and brand new so far as the public is concerned.

The experience that brought Wing into contact with Lincoln is as dramatic as any situation in Civil War drama or fiction. Here it is in his own words:

"May 6, 1864, found me with Grant in the Wilderness, with news that the nation was waiting for. I was the youngest of the New York 'Tribune's' field correspondents. Two years before, I had enlisted, was wounded at Fredericksburg, and invalided out of the service. I had gone to work for the Norwich, Connecticut, 'Bulletin,' where I wrote an editorial that attracted Horace Greeley's attention and he had given me the job as correspondent. I had joined the Army

of the Potomac at winter quarters in north-eastern Virginia. The hopes of the North were centered on that army. Then, suddenly, Grant and his 120,000 men disappeared into the forests south of the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers, cut off communication, and engaged Lee in that desperate three-day battle.

"At the close of the first day's fighting, as Grant was reforming his lines, the four 'Tribune' correspondents decided that one of us should try to get through to Washington and telegraph the news to our paper. I was 25, the youngest; so I volunteered.

"While making arrangements to leave, I met General Grant and told him of my plan. I asked him if I could carry a message for

him. Knowing, of course, that the seventy miles that lay between me and Washington was filled with guerrillas and enemy troops, he smiled grimly.

"Well," he said earnestly, 'if you do see the President, tell him for me that, whatever happens, there will be no turning back.'

"By four the next morning I was in the saddle and away. At Culpeper Mines a Unionist friend furnished me with a 'butter-nut' suit, a battered hat, and a pair of brogans, which he persuaded me was a safer costume than my correspondent's uniform.

Shortly afterward I was more than glad that I had taken his advice, for I ran, head-on, into a party of Mosby's guerrillas and was able to convince them that I was a Southern messenger to sympathizers in Washington. They offered to guide me to an easy ford on the Rappahannock and I could do nothing but accept. As we neared the place, my elation at having deceived them vanished, for they were taking me to a ford guarded by a man that

knew I was a Northern correspondent. The inevitable happened; I was recognized and had to cut for it. I spurred into the river, missed the ford and was forced to swim my horse across with the bullets splashing all around me.

"I got through, though, without a scratch, only to be held up by Confederate cavalry at Manassas Junction. I had abandoned the horse and was walking along the tracks of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad when they nabbed me. The guards were not strict. I waited until dusk, crawled between them, and ran. A six-mile walk in the dark, a challenge, and I was safely in the Federal lines at Union Mills.

"Of the half dozen correspondents that



H. E. Wing
As he appeared in Civil War time

had made the attempt, I learned I was the only one that had got through. But my troubles had only begun. The nearest public telegraph station was at Alexandria, 20 miles away, and it would close at midnight. This was at 9 o'clock. I couldn't get a horse or a handcar at any price, so over the military wire from Union Mills I sent to my friend C. A. Dana, second assistant secretary of war, this message:

"I am just in from the front. Left Grant at four o'clock this morning."

"Back came this:

"Where did you leave General Grant?"

"It was signed, not by Dana, but by Stanton, Secretary of War. Then I realized what it meant; the Government did not know what had happened in the Wilderness; I was first to a telegraph with the biggest news of the day!"

"I told Secretary Stanton that I would tell him all that I knew if he would let me send 100 words to my paper over the military wire.

"Again came the peremptory query: 'Where did you leave General Grant?'

"I replied that the news belonged to the 'Tribune' and reiterated my terms. Stanton's next message was to the post commander ordering him to arrest me as a spy unless I told what I knew!"

"Hungry, tired, and miserable I stretched out upon a bench in that cheerless station. I was virtually on parole pending orders from Washington as to what was to be done with me. Camp was still as death. I was just drowsing off when the telegraph sounder chattered again.

"It's for you," said the operator. 'Mr. Lincoln wants to know if you will tell him where General Grant is.'

"Mr. Lincoln! The President himself! Nevertheless, I repeated the terms I had made to Secretary Stanton and they were promptly accepted with the request that, in view of the importance of the news to the country, I give the Associated Press a brief

summary of my dispatch to the 'Tribune.'

"I was no longer hungry, tired, and miserable. Nothing whatever was the matter with me. Standing at the side of the operator at Union Mills, I dictated a dispatch that occupied a half-column in the 'Tribune' of the following morning. With the knowledge that my article was in my paper's hands, I started for Washington on a locomotive furnished by the President.

"The Cabinet was assembled at the White House when I arrived at about two in the morning. As I entered the room, I suddenly realized how unkempt was my appearance. I became aware that my 'butternut' coat

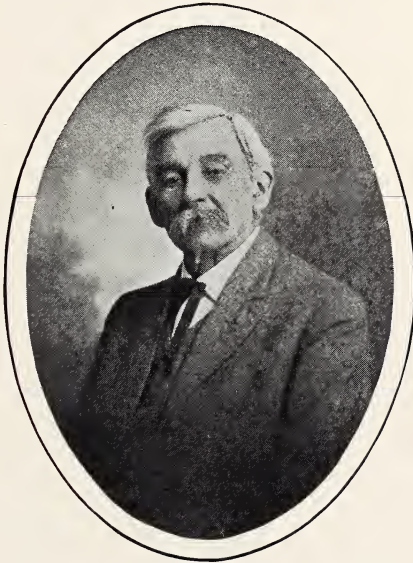
was very wrinkled and very dusty; that the trousers, far too long for me, had been turned up and tied with coarse twine; that my hair was wildly disordered; and that my brogans bore heavy deposits of the 'sacred soil' of Virginia. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, and a personal friend, introduced me around. With the aid of a large wall map I explained to the President and his aides what was happening in the Wilderness. Then I said that I had a personal message for the President and the Cabinet withdrew.

"Alone, the President seemed immensely tall.

I had not noticed it until he stood over me while I stammered out General Grant's message. He couldn't hear me clearly, and no wonder! Grasping me by the shoulders he bent over until his eyes were level with mine and made me repeat it. I summoned every effort to speak collectedly and said slowly:

"General Grant told me to tell you from him that, no matter what happens, there will be no turning back."

"The President's wonderful eyes glowed. I shall never forget this picture of him. Every other leader of the Army of the Potomac had turned back, and I had brought him word from one that would not. Exuberant, he pulled me to him—and, he was so glad, *he kissed me on the forehead.*"



H. E. Wing

As he appears to-day, age 82

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